

Daniel 8 – Daniel’s Vision of a Ram and a Goat

Read Daniel 8

This section of the Book of Daniel is written in Hebrew (chapters 2:4-7:28) were written in Aramaic.

Vs 1 This vision happens 2 years after the vision of the 4 beasts in Chapter 7.

Vs 2 Where was Daniel when he got this vision? Shushan was located approximately 225 miles east of the capital city of Babylon. He was along (by) the river Ulai, which is the modern-day Karkheh River, which flows through southwestern Iran and is fed by the melting snows of the Zagros Mountains. Why do you think he was in Shushan? According to vs 27, he was doing business for the king.

Vs 3 What did he see? A ram with two tall horns, one taller than the other. This was an accurate prediction of the partnership between the Medes and the Persians, because the Persians were larger and stronger in the partnership. The higher one came up last. This represents the Persian empire emerging after the Medes. In vs 20 this ram was clearly identified as representing the Medo-Persian Empire, which succeeded the Babylonian Empire. The ram was the national emblem of Persia and a ram was stamped on Persian coins. The Persian ruler bore the head of a ram as he stood at the head of his army.

Vs 4 Where did this ram go? The Medo-Persian Empire exerted its power to the west (took Greece), north (conquered the Scythians) and south (defeated the Egyptians). It took territory, but made no major conquests, towards the east. Could any animal withstand this ram? No. Could anyone deliver from its hand? No. He did whatever he wanted to. What did he become? He grew to be great.

Vs 5 While Daniel was thinking about the ram, what does he suddenly see? A male goat coming from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground. Wow. What did the ram have that was notable? A horn between its eyes.

Vs 6 – 7 Describe the battle between these two beasts. The goat ran at the ram with furious power, with rage. The goat attacked the ram and broke both horns. The ram became powerless. The goat cast the ram to the ground and trampled it, defeated. There was no one to help him. The goat was a common representation of the Greek Empire. The Greek Empire rose from the west of previous empires, it rose with great speed, had a notable ruler (Alexander the Great) and had a famous war with the Medo-Persian Empire. The Greek Empire and the Medo-Persian Empire greatly hated each other. Some of the greatest, fiercest battles of ancient history were fought between the Greeks and the Persians.

Vs 8 What happened after the defeat of the ram? The male goat grew very great. Did it last long? No, while he was still strong, the large horn was broken. Alexander the Great died at just 32 years old. What happened after the large horn was broken? Four notable ones came up toward the 4 winds of heaven. Alexander had no heirs and when asked who should reign after him, he said “the strongest”. This led to infighting and 4 of his strongest generals ruled after him (Cassander, ruling over Greece and its region, Lysimachus, ruling over Asia Minor, Seleucus, ruling over Syria and Israel’s land, Ptolemy, ruling over Egypt). As God guided history, He used Alexander’s passion to spread Greek culture to prepare the world for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of Alexander’s influence, *koine* (common) Greek became the common language of the civilized world and is the language of the New Testament.

Vs 9 – 12 Which horn does Daniel follow? Since the dominion of this horn was extended toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land, we can identify the historical fulfillment of this little horn in Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled over Syria and Israel’s land under the Seleucid dynasty. Antiochus IV gained the throne of his father (Antiochus III) by murdering his brother, the former king Seleucus Philopator. The son of Philopator was the rightful heir to the throne, but Antiochus IV had him held hostage in Rome. Antiochus IV legitimized his rule mainly through flattery and bribery. What is the glorious land? Israel Ezekiel 20:6, 25:9. Antiochus Epiphanes exerted his dominion toward the south, the east, and the land of Israel. He murdered other rulers (cast down some of the host) and persecuted the people of Israel, blasphemed God and commanded idolatrous worship directed towards himself, put a stop to temple sacrifices in Jerusalem and desecrated the temple (with a PIG!). Because of transgression (of Israel), an army was given over him (horn) to oppose the daily sacrifices. Notice he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. What?! Evil prospering?

Vs 13 – 14 What did the Holy One ask and what was the answer? They wanted to know how long the sacrifices would be suspended and how long the sanctuary would be desecrated. The answer was 2,300 days. The date when the temple was cleansed is well established as December 25, 165 B.C. If we count back 2,300 days from then, we come to the year when Antiochus Epiphanes began his persecution in earnest (171 B.C.).

Vs 15 -16 Daniel is trying to understand the vision (remember, this all seems clear to us now but when he had this vision, Mede-Persian and Greece were not big). Who comes to give him the interpretation? Ultimately, the angel Gabriel. But notice how it comes to pass; he sees what is apparently a man, then he hears a voice in the middle of the river directing the angel Gabriel to give him the interpretation.

Vs 17 What was Daniel's reaction when the "man" approached him? He was afraid and fell on his face. What did Gabriel tell him? Understand that this vision refers to the time of the end.

Vs 18 What happens next? It seems like he was what is commonly called "slain in the spirit". The Gabriel touched him and stood him up (revived him).

Vs 19 Gabriel gives the reason of his ministry. What is it? To show him what will happen in the later days. Indignation means *God's displeasure with sin*. Then he says something interesting. He said "the appointed time the end shall be". In other words, it is set in time by our all-knowing God.

Vs 20 – 21 Who does Gabriel say the ram is? Media and Persia, represented by the two horns. As we discussed before, horns often allude to kings or leaders. Who is the male goat? The kingdom of Greece. Gabriel explains the large horn is the first king of Greece (Alexander the Great).

Vs 22 Gabriel next explains what happens after Alexander the Great dies, which we already saw – 4 generals become kings and take over the kingdom, but it is not as strong nor is it united as it was under Alexander.

Vs 23 – 26 Now Gabriel gives a prophecy related to Daniel's vision, showing the multiple layers of Scripture. Daniel's vision referred to the next two kingdoms coming after Babylon. Gabriel's prophecy deals with the anti-Christ in the last days. The prophecy in this passage reads equally true of both Antiochus and the anti-Christ. This is an example of a prophetic passage that has both a near and far fulfillment.

- Having fierce features: Antiochus Epiphanes was known for his cruel brutality. This will also be true of the coming Antichrist.
- Who understands sinister schemes... through his cunning: Antiochus was known for his flattery and smooth tongue. The coming Antichrist will strike a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27) by smooth-talking.
- His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: Antiochus Epiphanes was empowered by Satan and allowed by God. The same will be true of the coming anti-Christ.
- Shall prosper and thrive: Antiochus Epiphanes looked like a total success. The coming Antichrist will look like a complete winner until God topples his reign.
- He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people: Antiochus Epiphanes not only destroyed his enemies, but also harshly persecuted the people of God. The coming Antichrist will also destroy and persecute.
- He shall cause deceit to prosper: Both the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes in the past and of the anti-Christ in the future are marked by deceit. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).
- He shall exalt himself in his heart: The coins of Antiochus Epiphanes were inscribed with this title: THEOS EPIPHANIES meaning, "God manifest." The coming Antichrist will also exalt himself: So that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).
- He shall even rise against the Prince of princes: Though Antiochus Epiphanes hated the people of God and fought against them, it was because he really hated God. The same will be true of the coming anti-Christ, who will hate the Jews because he hates God.
- Broken without human means: History tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes died of disease, not by the hand of man. In a similar way no man will defeat the coming Antichrist, but the hand of Jesus will strike him down (Revelation 19:20).
- Therefore seal up the vision: Daniel must do this because in his day the vision referred to a period far distant in its ultimate fulfillment. For us, the time is near (Revelation 1:3) and the book is unsealed (Revelation 22:10).

Vs 27 How did this vision leave Daniel? Well, he fainted again, then was sick for days. After he recovered, he finished doing the king's business. The vision amazed him and he apparently shared it with others, but they could not understand it. Why do you think this was?

Details of Antiochus Deeds from the Book of Maccabees

Antiochus was an infamous persecutor of the Jewish people. He wanted them to submit to Greek culture and customs and was more than willing to use murder and violence to compel them.

The first attack of Antiochus against the Jews of this time was to settle a rivalry for the office of high priest. A pious high priest, Onias III, was removed from office and was replaced with his brother Jason because Jason bribed Antiochus. Then in 172 B.C. another brother (Menelaus) gave Antiochus an even bigger bribe and replaced Jason. A year later Menelaus started selling many of the temple's gold utensils to raise money to pay off the bribe. Onias III rebuked him, and Menelaus had him murdered. Meanwhile, Jason gathered armies and fought against Menelaus to regain the office of High Priest. Antiochus Epiphanes came in to Jerusalem in 171 B.C. to defend the man who paid him a bigger bribe to be the High Priest.

Antiochus's suppression of the Jews came to a head in December of 168 B.C. when he returned in defeat from Alexandria. He ordered his generals to seize Jerusalem on a Sabbath. There he set up an idol of Zeus and desecrated the altar by an offering of swine and sprinkling the pig's juices in the sanctuary. Sacrifice stopped because the temple was desecrated.

1 Maccabees 1:29-32 and 1:52-61 describe how Antiochus persecuted the Jews. 1 Maccabees 1:41-50 describes his blasphemies. By some estimates he was responsible for the murder of more than 100,000 Jews.

· *And after two years fully expired the king sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Juda, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude, and spake peaceable words unto them, but all was deceit: for when they had given him credence, he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel. And when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side. But the women and children took they captive, and possessed the cattle. (1 Maccabees 1:29-32)*

· *Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land; and drove the Israelites into secret places, even wheresoever they could flee for succour. Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side; and burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets. And when they had torn in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And whosoever was found with any book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death. Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. Now the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God. At which time according to the commandment they put to death certain women, that had caused their children to be circumcised. And they hanged the infants about their necks, and rifled their houses, and slew them that had circumcised them. (1 Maccabees 1:52-61)*

· *Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, and every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king. Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath. For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land, and forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days, and pollute the sanctuary and holy people: set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts: That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation, to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he said, he should die. (1 Maccabees 1:41-50)*